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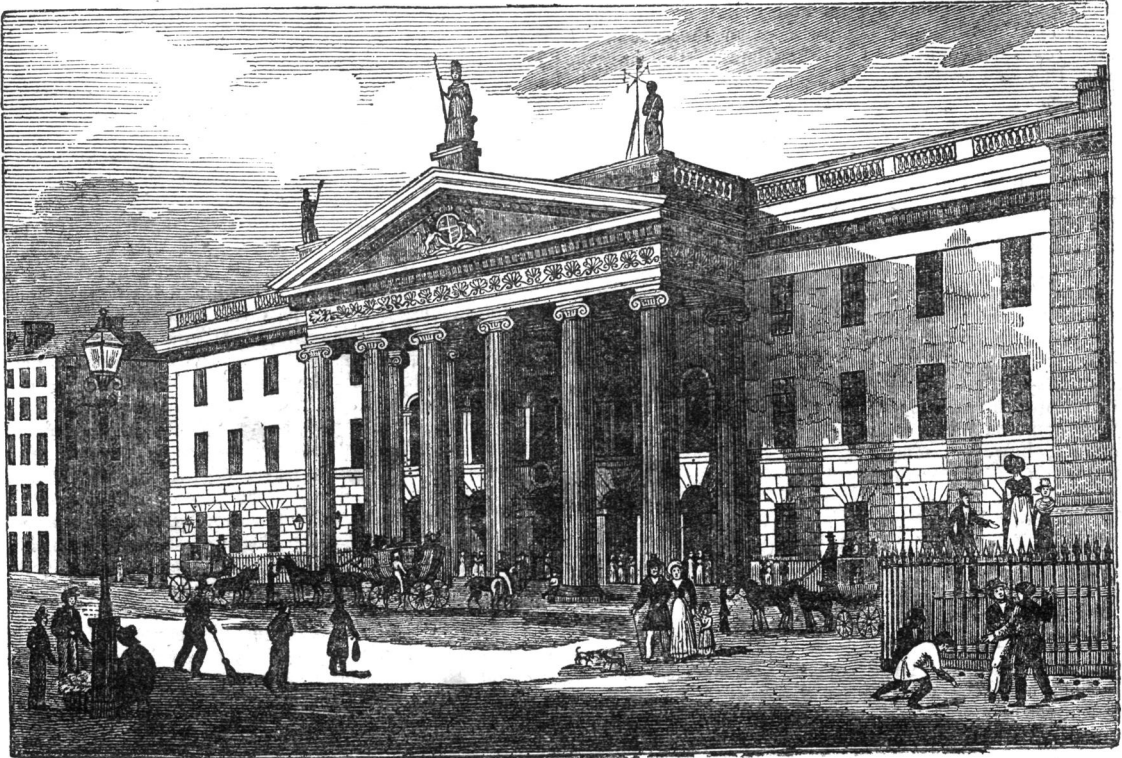
# THE DUBLIN PENNY JOURNAL

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GENERAL POST-OFFICE, DUBLIN.

This noble building, one of the finest structures of the kind in Europe, stands on the west side of Sackville-street. It is 223 feet in front, 150 in depth, and 50 feet (three stories) in height, to the top of the cornice. In front is a grand portico, 80 feet in length, consisting of a pediment, supported by six massive pillars, of the Ionic order. This pediment is surmounted by three finely executed statues, representing Hibernia resting on her spear and harped shield; Mercury, with his caduceus and purse; and Fidelity, with her finger on her lips, and a key in the other hand. The tympanum of the pediment is decorated with the royal arms, and a fine balustrade surmounts the cornice all round the top, giving an elegant finish to the whole. This superb edifice is built of mountain granite, except the portico, which is of Portland stone. The expense was something more than fifty thousand pounds.

The first stone of this magnificent edifice was laid by his Excellency, Earl Whitworth, on the 12th of August, 1815. With the exception of the Board-room, which is rather an elegant apartment, and in which there is a white marble bust of Earl Whitworth, there is no object worthy the notice of the tourist in the interior. The departure of the coaches from the office, would by some be deemed rather an interesting exhibition. Ten or twelve mail-coaches leave Dublin every evening for different parts of Ireland. They all assemble at the General Post Office every evening, a little before seven o'clock, and having received the bags, each in their turn, set out for their different destinations. This nightly exhibition generally attracts a crowd of spectators, when the sound of the

horns, the prancing of the horses, and the last adieus of friends, form altogether a very interesting and animated picture.

As a public convenience of the highest utility, the Post-Office, in its present improved state, must be considered as one of the most useful and important establishments in any country. In civilized nations, even amongst the ancients, it appears that the interests and feelings of mankind very early pointed out the necessity of some regular mode of communication between distant places. After the fall of the Roman empire, however, no posts seem to have existed in Europe until about 1475, when Louis XI. established them for the conveyance of state information throughout France. In England letters were conveyed by special messengers, until a system of postage was established in the reign of Elizabeth, which was conducted by individuals for their own profit. Things continued in this state until 1643, when Charles I. ordered his Post-master for foreign parts to run a post between London and Edinburgh; and similar regulations were soon after made for Ireland, by Chester and Holyhead. The system was much improved during the Protectorate of Cromwell, when regular packet-boats were established between Chester and Dublin, and Milford and Waterford. The rates of postage at that time were—for every single letter within eighty miles of London, two pence; beyond that distance to any part of England, three pence; to Scotland, four pence; and to Ireland, six pence. In 1711, a Post-master General was appointed for all the British dominions; but in 1782, when the independence of Ireland was acknowledged, its Post Office became a separate establishment,

and has continued to be so, notwithstanding the Union. It is, however, in contemplation to join it with the London establishment.

The introduction of mail-coaches has not only greatly improved the system of the Post Office, but has been attended with the greatest advantages to the general interests of Ireland. Previous to their introduction, the state of the roads was such, that it commonly took five or six days to perform a journey from Dublin to Cork, and it is said that persons, in those days, deemed it a matter of more serious importance to undertake a long journey through Ireland; than many do at present to undertake a voyage to America. The first mail-coaches commenced running from Dublin to Cork and Belfast on the 5th of July, 1790. A regular improvement in the state of the Irish roads has continued from that time to the present, and they are now allowed to be amongst the best in Europe.

#### "THE AMULET."

In our usual course of noticing the *Annals*—one at a time—as among the best of the present year's production we turn to the "Amulet," which, within a modest and unassuming binding, possesses more of beauty and excellence than is to be met with in several of its competitors, who wear a much more attractive and splendid exterior. Of the ten elegant engravings with which it is embellished we prefer the "Gipsy Mother," by Wilkie; and "The Watches on the Beach," by Timbrell. As to the general contents of the work we cannot say much: scarcely one of the stories reach mediocrity, while the poetry is of a very common place order. The volume has one good quality, however; several of the sketches furnish information, in a pleasing form, on subjects well calculated to interest the general reader. Of those the description of "The Water-Mole of Australia," by George Bennett, Esq., will serve as an instance; while "The Gipsy Mother," by Mrs. Hoffman, may be taken as a fair specimen of the stories in the work.

#### THE GIPSY MOTHER.

"Mercy!—mercy! Oh! have mercy on him!—he is young, very young. I will kneel to you for mercy."

Such were the words, uttered almost in the shriek of terror, yet by a voice of singular sweetness, which arrested the steps of William Hughes, as he was dragging towards the horse-pond a young gipsy boy, whom he had caught in the fact of stealing his mother's poultry. The depredations had been of late numerous, and much greater than the little farm could bear. William was very angry, and justly bent on punishing the culprit; but he paused at the cry of distress. The gipsy girl forced her way through the brake, and stood before him in all the agitation fear and affection could inspire, again fervently imploring his pity.

"We have neither father nor mother to teach us any thing. I am his elder—but it is seldom boys obey girls. I will watch over him and guide him: he will never, *never* come here again if you will forgive him now."

William did not believe this, although he had known instances of promises being kept by the tribe; and he was also aware that the pleader would have preferred the ducking he meditated, to the transportation he might cause. But he could not bring himself to inflict the punishment she would unquestionably share so acutely; and he contented himself with giving a slight shake and a heavy threat to the culprit, who bounded far away the moment he was released, leaving his still trembling sister to receive the reproaches too likely to be poured upon her head, and through her on that of all her tribe.

But Ayeshe's gratitude was so fervently, yet modestly expressed, her sensibility was so genuine, and her helplessness so deprecating (as one of a degraded and reprobated caste), that William said not a word beyond that of warning her against approaching his father's premises; adding in a softened tone, as he perceived the liquid lustre of those eyes which still swam in tears, and the pearly whiteness of teeth displayed by her still pleading lips:—

"Of course, I mean, keep the boy away: of yourself, my girl, I never knew harm of any kind."

William strode away rapidly towards the house; but the steps of the gipsy maiden were slow and disconsolate. And, when she had re-passed the stile, and crossed the meadow, often did she peer through the hedge to see if he were indeed inclosed within the walls of his father's dwelling; if he were indeed beyond the ken of eyes which she thought could discover him in the depths of the earth, and offer him the fond homage of her thanks, her admiration, and (though she knew it not) her love.

Neither Benoni nor Ayeshe were again found near Farmer Hughes's barns; but never did William go forth to the field, or the market, without seeing, in some green dell or narrow lane, the slight form, beaming eyes, and blushing cheek of the young gipsy. Never did she essay to offer him any sample of her art as a fortune-teller; never did she appear employed on any vagrant errand: either she was seated, making cabbage-nets or baskets for sale, or she was walking steadily forward towards some of the neighbouring hamlets. It was impossible not to return the "good-morrow," so gently whispered—not to acknowledge the grateful recognition of one evidently so well disposed.

Thus, naturally and blamelessly, commenced an acquaintance which, by degrees, on the side of William, ripened into friendship; for his heart had need of a confidant, since times were hard, and his father's flock was too numerous for the pasture. Thence the transition to love was soon made; and, alas! from love to error.

There was not a man of better character in that part of Sussex which he inhabited than Farmer Hughes, nor one whose family had hitherto done more credit to their father's precept and example. Bitter was the agony of William, when he felt himself to be the first who should bring shame on the house where he had been held the especial darling; bitter still the pang of separation from a fond, loving, tender creature, who, however the world might despise and reject her, he knew to possess an understanding and capacity beyond any female in his circle of companions, and whose only fault, so far as he had seen, was that of having loved *him* too well.

Still, there was "a great gulf between them," and it was but right that he should feel the value of his own situation as the son of an honest man, religiously brought up, efficiently educated, whom younger brothers looked up to for example, and sisters considered their protector. Could he hope, or even desire, that his family should receive amongst them a creature brought up among profligate pilferers, ignorant of the common decencies of life, averse to labour, unconscious of honesty, and deemed by all a *heathen* and an *outcast*? Must he wring, perhaps *break*, the heart of his mother, and bring "his father's grey hairs with sorrow to the grave," by an union with one at whom every finger in the parish would point with contempt? Yet, could he forsake her? She asked not, expected not, the reparation others (no better perhaps) would have demanded; but did not her submission, her silence plead?

Such were the thoughts continually racking the heart of William, whilst yet the guilty secret rested in his own bosom; and to his corroding cares was added the hourly dread of discovery. Happily for him the whole neighbourhood were engrossed by a subject of such absorbing interest, that neither his untimely walks, haggard looks, nor impoverished appearance, excited curiosity; though within a short time he had been the smartest-frocked youth in the parish at church, and the best appointed player on the cricket-ground.

At this period that truly patriotic nobleman, the earl of Egremont (whose comprehensive charity at once embraces the widest objects of benevolence, and stoops to the minutest details) was providing the means of emigration to Canada for numbers of persons who found no market for their labour on his over-populated lands. Farmer Hughes had not the happiness of being his lordship's tenant, for his small farm belonged to a small proprietor; but, as he was situated in a district belonging to him, and had in his large family at least two sons who might go out with great advantage, and were likely, from their age and abilities, to share the beneficent intentions of one whose bounties flow in no narrow stream, he was amongst the